

I ♥ Fair Trade



Newsletter of Fair Trade for a Greater Orlando Coalition (FTGOC)

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Introduction

Welcome to the second issue of *I ♥ Fair Trade*, the newsletter of Fair Trade for a Greater Orlando Coalition. In this issue you will find an article on the differences between Fair Trade and Free Trade, as well as our regular "That's Fair" column, which in this issue spotlights the Winter Park store of Ten Thousand Villages. As we move into 2008, we also have some major developments that we are pleased to announce. First, the FTGOC website has been given a complete "make over". At the new website you will find up-to-date information about FTGOC and its activities, you can read up on the latest Fair Trade news items from around Florida, and you can peruse the "Buy" section, which includes a constantly updated list of businesses selling Fair Trade products locally and online. Second, planning for the third annual World Fair Trade Day in Orlando is in full swing! We are looking forward to this event, which will be held at Drunken Monkey Coffee Bar (near the intersection of Colonial and Bumby) on May 10th. We need volunteers: so if you would like to help make this event a big success, please contact us. We need you! And lastly, in December FTGOC began dialogue with members of the Orlando City Commission towards establishing Fair Trade purchasing policies for the city's departments. We will keep you informed about the progress of this initiative in following newsletters and at our website.

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In the meantime, enjoy the newsletter and support Fair Trade! And we hope to see you May 10th at World Fair Trade Day!

Fair Trade vs. Free Trade

Free Trade and Fair trade are both market based economic systems. Both rely on a market place where producers may bring products for sale and consumers may choose just what they want when they want provided they can pay for it. However, the similarities end there. Examining who organizes and benefits from each rubric goes a long way towards explaining the modes of each system. Free Trade is organized at trade conferences and negotiations, many of which are conducted in secret. That fact is suggestive for reasons that should be obvious. Where these proceedings are more or less open, they are attended by the political elite. Presidents and ambassadors who have varying degrees of accountability to the publics they represent. These proceedings are heavily



influenced by the play of power, regardless of the intentions of the participants therein. States with great militaries or strategic resources have great influence over others. One might say diplomacy is practiced, but not democracy. Other loci of Free Trade organization and planning are the secret meetings and judicial proceedings of global organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. While these organizations have had a great degree of secrecy from their inception, secrecy has become even more important since their meetings attract

protest crowds numbering in the thousands. The "Battle in Seattle" is the most significant US example. In these secret meetings corporate and political elites decide how to dismantle tariffs, price supports, social spending, subsidies, and other "barriers to trade." What is usually unstated is how they decide *NOT* to dismantle these modes. While all preach the "neoliberal free trade" gospel, the most radical free trade ideology, those that sing the loudest are often the most hypocritical. For instance, the US and to a lesser degree Europe, still maintain many tariffs and subsidies on steel and agricultural products. This fact exposes these proceedings as little more than the imposition of power, not principles. The organization of the Fair Trade rubric is derived from completely different sources serving different interests. Fair Trade is organized by consumers and producers working through non-profit organizations. Non-profit and stakeholder organizations such as Transfair and Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International (FLO) establish environmental, labor, and democracy standards which producers may choose to meet to receive the Fair Trade Certified label. The certification provides the producers with minimum price guarantees and help with global marketing. It also allows consumers to choose products made under the conditions just stated and avoid supporting slave labor, child labor, sweatshop labor, and environmental harm. While consumers have a role in the labeling organizations, their most crucial role lies in the decentralized, networked advocacy groups who promote Fair Trade as a consumer option and work to establish Fair Trade purchasing policies in their popular institutions like governments, schools, churches, and social clubs. The multiplicity of networked voluntary associations working to organize Fair Trade demonstrates a far more democratic mode of economic activity. The resulting values of the Free Trade and Fair Trade rubrics are determined by the organization modes previously noted.

Free Trade, organized by the Corporate and Political elite, values ever increasing profits. The profit seeking compulsion will suffer no borders and so must expand world wide, often with the assistance of state violence, either threatened or realized. Free Trade also values oligarchic political-economic decision-making. Consumers and producers don't get votes, delegates or representatives at secret meetings. Free Trade values investor and corporate rights. NAFTA is mostly an investor's rights agreement. Unless you are willing to consider GM moving a car from a GM factory in Mexico to a GM factory in the US as *trade*, NAFTA has not and was not designed to increase trade. It simply allowed the internal transfer of capital to be conducted with more ease, and to the detriment of workers in both the US and Mexico since, under the new rules, high paying union jobs in Michigan could be outsourced to union busting countries such as Mexico. Finally, Free Trade values commodification.

Commodification is the process of turning something not previously considered in economic terms into another product to be bought and sold under free market conditions. Nothing is sacred. Everything from genes to workers are commodified and therefore subject to the demands of the most powerful players in the market. Traditions and rights have no place here unless they can be put on a t-shirt and sold.

From Fair Trade flows a wholly different set of values. Traditional knowledge and creativity are given an opportunity to flourish in the world market. Human rights such as the right to organize labor unions are a part of the Fair Trade rubric. While solidarity at the loci of production is valued, a new kind of solidarity is developed by Fair Trade. Solidarity between the producers and the consumers. Under conditions of Free Trade, producers and consumers in the global market are narrowly considered only in terms of the one's profit and the other's price. The Fair Trade rubric develops mutual concern for the interests of both producer and consumer. While the international union movements have encouraged a reaching out between union producers in one country and union consumers in another, the expansion of this global solidarity outside of union circles maybe a novel development in human affairs. Environmental protection

and sustainable development as well as democratically organized workplaces are values specifically required by Fair Trade Certification. Many Fair Trade producers also contribute to community development. Producers are encouraged to set aside some income for education, transportation, housing, and health care. The different values realized under Fair Trade conditions and the democratic organizational forms that give rise to these values (and are desiderata themselves) are the reason Fair Trade sales, like certified organic sales, continue to rise rapidly. The embrace of these values and the global solidarity built outside of the working class labor movements signifies a new era of civilizing tendencies that is both product and accelerant.

– Scott Tess

That's Fair!

Since 1946, Ten Thousand Villages has been improving lives in countries around the world by selling products made by local artisans within a fair trade context, helping to ensure that workers and their families work and live with dignity. Mary Dipboye opened the Winter Park store of Ten Thousand Villages in September



2006 (it is their second store in Florida, the other opening in Tallahassee in 2005). Selling everything from pillows to jewelry, wall art to napkin rings, and journals to musical instruments, Ten Thousand Villages is the perfect alternative for home décor and gift ideas. Make a statement, and a difference! Stop by their store at 346 N. Park Ave. in Winter Park, or visit:

<http://orlando.tenthousandvillages.com>

About FTGOC

Our main goal is to work with the City of Orlando to pass a Fair Trade Resolution. This would mean that whenever the City Departments buy coffee, for example,

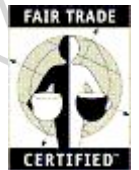
they would choose the Fair Trade alternative. In support of this goal, FTGOC also seeks to:

- 1) Educate the community about the Fair Trade alternative,
- 2) Expand the market for Fair Trade products, and
- 3) Build a strong coalition of community groups supporting Fair Trade.

Volunteers needed...

World Fair Trade Day is right around the corner. Help FTGOC make this event a success by volunteering your time and talents. Contact Crystal at 407-949-2809 to find out how you can help.

In the meantime, look for the Fair Trade Certified™ label. There are numerous vendors online and in business locally here in Greater Orlando that sell Fair Trade products. If your local grocery store or coffee shop does not stock fair trade products, let them know why it is important to you.



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"The reality is that no industrial country – not the United States, not Canada, not the countries of the EEC, not the other European states, not, we all know, Japan – leaves its farmers to the free market. None. Those who affirm the beneficence of the free market for agriculture are, as regards the industrially developed countries, speaking of something that does not exist." – John Kenneth Galbraith, July 27, 1987.